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Module 1: Personal Narrative

Winds of Change

“The wind is changing.”

My dad was sitting near the living room window of our Ocean City rental. Anyone who has been to the beach in New Jersey knows that changes in the wind can mean bad things for beach goers. It isn’t even the wind itself that most concerns us, but what the wind brings. So here we are in this lovely little beach town that we visit every year and now we are concerned about our vacation being ruined by this change in the wind.

As teachers, we are very accustomed to having plenty of beach time in the summer. There are several important elements that make a good beach day. First, one must obviously be on the beach. Some beaches are better than others. We enjoy beaches that other people do not because we do not like people or boardwalks or children on our beaches. In New Jersey, there is one place where you can get this almost every day in the summer: Bayhead. You’re not even allowed to bring food on this beach and due to this the “riffraff” stays away. For the last 2 years we have chosen a week in August to make a pilgrimage to Ocean City because for the most part, this “riffraff” is not represented in the people who are sharing the beach with us.

The second key element to a good beach day is sunblock. If you get too burned by the sun, you will miss out on days while allowing time for the skin to heal. At the same time, one cannot choose a sunblock with too much SPF, or a suntan will be hard to obtain. Everyone looks good with a tan. Considering this, I usually go with an SPF 15 sunscreen. This prevents burning but allows for bronzing.

The final element is weather. Sunny or partly cloudy and a steady breeze that comes out of the east. This was the element we were afraid we’d be missing. This is the element that could ruin our entire vacation. What my father had noticed was that the wind was now coming out of the west. Anyone who frequents the beach knows that a western wind brings the worst thing ever, horseflies. There is nothing horseflies like more than beach goers with their warm, cooking flesh and salty taste. A western wind will ruin a beach day because these flies bite and bite hard.

All of this runs through my head at my father’s comment because I have a tendency to over think things.

“Do you think we should just hang out on the deck?” I’m surprised at my question. No one wants to go to the beach more than me, but I also do not want to carry the beach chairs, umbrellas, coolers, and other various necessities if we are not going to be able to stay up there for an extended period of time.

“I didn’t drive all the way down here to hang out on the deck,” my father’s rebuttal matches my desire to make the trek up to the beach. “But if there are flies up there, it’s not going to be a very enjoyable day.” I know he’s right, but I’m determined not to let this discourage us.

We go about preparing for our walk up the sand, grabbing frozen waters from the freezer and placing them in the cooler and walking by the windows to see if the wind had changed again, but it hadn’t. This one idea, there may be flies, had ruined our day before it even started. It had sucked the enthusiasm we had had the previous days, out of the journey through the bushes and over the dunes.

It was at that moment when we got to the top of the hill where the dunes met the beach that we realized that we had been wrong. As we arrived at the summit and started to descend on to the beach we felt it for the first time, the wind was blowing in our faces, coming from the east, and extinguishing much of the warmth the sun had created on our skin on the walk. It was a beautiful day and we had almost missed it.

My father and I did not say anything. We just exchanged a sideways glance and continued to a perfect spot near the edge of the sand. We would not have known there were no flies if we had not gone to the beach that day, but we would have known that we missed out on one of our favorite things. Sometimes, in order to experience life to it’s absolute fullest, we have to do things that may make us uncomfortable. Often, we are correct in our assumptions that something may not be enjoyable, but once in a while, we have an experience that will stay with us forever. This day will stay with me forever.